

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 02663 01 OF 02 171929Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 SAJ-01 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-13 COME-00

LAB-04 SIL-01 CIEP-01 IGA-02 DHA-02 /098 W

-----171947 082410 /41

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2852

INFO AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 2663

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICIAL

SUMMARY. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) ECONOMIC EXPERT AND DIRECTORATE MEMBER LUCIANO BARCA EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE DRIFT OF THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION AND OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF A GOVERNMENT CRISIS IN THE NEAR TERM. HE DENIED THAT THE PARTY IS HAVING PROBLEMS IN ITS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN AND CLAIMED THAT THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED TRADE UNION (CGIL) NOW HAD THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN ITS HISTORY. BARCA SAID THAT THE PCI HAS CONCLUDED THAT NEITHER THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE NOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY IS ATTAINABLE IN THE SHORT OR MIDDLE TERM; HOWEVER, THE PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO POINT TO THESE PUBLICLY AS OBJECTIVES. MEANWHILE, THE PCI IS WORKING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAM FOR THE MIDDLE TERM WHICH WILL SERVE AS A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATING A POSSIBLE PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD WITH THE OTHER PARTIES WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE PCI TO TAKE A STEP FORWARD BY ENTERING A GOVERNING MAJORITY. BARCA DID NOT FEEL THAT DISSENT IN EASTERN EUROPE WOULD HURT THE PCI IN THE SHORT TERM, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS WERE IT TO CONTINUE FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD. END
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PAGE 02 ROME 02663 01 OF 02 171929Z

SUMMARY.

1. DURING AN EXTENDED CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, BARCA RECENTLY EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE DETERIORATING POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE RISING POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE COUNTRY. BARCA PARTICULARLY REGRETTED THESE TRENDS SINCE THEY CAME JUST AS THE LABOR AGREEMENT WITH CONFINDUSTRIA HAD BEEN REACHED AND AS THERE HAD BEEN A MARKED

IMPROVEMENT IN THE ITALIAN BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION. CONSEQUENTLY, THESE POLITICAL TENSIONS TENDED TO HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECTS JUST AS THERE WERE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT. BARCA ATTRIBUTED THE POLITICAL TENSIONS PARTIALLY TO DISSATISFACTION WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY OVER THE PERSONALIZED STYLE OF LEADERSHIP OF CRAXI, MANCA, AND SIGNORILE, TO GROWING DISENCHANTMENT AMONG CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ABOUT ZACCAGNINI'S LACK OF DECISIVE LEADERSHIP AS PARTY SECRETARY, AND DIFFERENCES WITHIN CONFINDUSTRIA ABOUT THE POLICIES PURSUED BY GUIDO CARLI IN NEGOTIATING

THE LABOR AGREEMENT WITH THE UNIONS. THE CONVERGENCE OF THESE SEPARATE DEVELOPMENTS AT A PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL POINT IN TIME HAS BEEN SEIZED UPON BY OTHERS TO ATTEMPT TO DESTABILIZE THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND, IN BARCA'S VIEW, TO PUSH THE PCI BACK INTO OPPOSITION WHERE IT DOES NOT DESIRE TO GO.

2. IN BARCA'S VIEW, THE ITALIAN ECONOMY IS IN SOMEWHAT BETTER SHAPE THAN MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT WISH TO UNDERESTIMATE THE DIFFICULTIES THE COUNTRY IS GOING THROUGH. THERE ARE CERTAIN SECTORS WHICH ARE DOING EXCEEDINGLY WELL, INCLUDING SOME INVOLVED IN THE ALL IMPORTANT AREA OF FOREIGN TRADE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SIZE OF PUBLIC DEBT, PARTICULARLY THAT GENERATED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES, IS PREOCCUPYING. FURTHERMORE, THE DEFLATIONARY EFFORTS NOW BEING ATTEMPTED RUN THE RISK OF DISCOURAGING INVESTMENT WITH THE ACCOMPANYING PROBLEM OF A DECLINE IN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. FINALLY, BARCA EXPRESSED A MEASURE OF CONCERN ABOUT CERTAIN PRESSURES ON THE LIRE WHICH COULD OCCUR AT THE END OF FEBRUARY OR EARLY MARCH. BARCA STRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT BOTH FOR THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 02663 01 OF 02 171929Z

OF THE COUNTRY THAT THE IMF LOAN BE APPROVED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND HE URGED THAT THE USG DO WHATEVER IT COULD DO TO FACILITATE SUCCESSFULLY THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE LOAN.

3. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, BARCA OBSERVED THAT THE BASE OF THE PARTY SEEMED TO HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PCI'S POLICIES AND TACTICS THAN IT DID SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. HE DISCOUNTED REPORTS THAT THE PARTY WAS EXPERIENCING SOME DECLINE IN THE CURRENT MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN, PARTICULARLY IN SOME OF THE NORTHER INDUSTRIAL AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. HE NOTED WITH PRIDE THAT CGIL MEMBERSHIP HAS SURGED PAST 4,500,000, A FIGURE WHICH GOES BEYOND EVERYONE'S BEST EXPECTATION. BARCA EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN OVER THE PARTY'S FAILURE TO ATTRACT CONVERTS FROM SOME OF THE EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY LEFT GROUPS WHICH ARE BREAKING UP AND LOSING STRENGTH. RATHER THAN PASSING TO THE PCI, YOUNG ADHERENTS OF THESE GROUPS ARE TURNING TO OTHER OUTLETS SUCH AS DRUGS AND DELINQUENCY AND ARE DROPPING OUT OF THE POLITICAL SCENE. THE PCI IS CURRENTLY SUPPORTING A STUDY IN SOME ROMAN SUBURBS TO ASCERTAIN THE CAUSES FOR THIS PHENOMENON WHICH

IS DISTURBING FROM THE PARTY'S STANDPOINT.

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PAGE 01 ROME 02663 02 OF 02 171942Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 2663

4. BARCA INDICATED THAT THE PARTY IS MOVING AHEAD WITH ITS PLANS TO DRAFT A PROGRAM FOR THE MIDDLE TERM (THREE TO FOUR YEARS). HE STATED THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME DEBATE WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP IN AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE THE ORIENTATION OF THE DOCUMENT: MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE IT SHOULD ADDRESS ONLY ECONOMIC ISSUES WHILE OTHERS ARGUE THAT IT SHOULD DEAL WITH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES. DRAWING UPON THE DEBATES AT FORTHCOMING REGIONAL PARTY CONGRESSES, A WORKING GROUP WITHIN THE PARTY'S DIRECTORATE WILL ELABORATE A DRAFT OF THE PLAN WHICH WILL THEN BE SUBJECT TO GENERAL DEBATE BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE (INTELLECTUALS, SOCIALITES, REPUBLICANS) THE PARTY. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE DOCUMENT WILL BE COMPLETED BY APRIL, AT WHICH TIME IT WOULD SERVE AS A DOCUMENT FOR DEBATE WITH OTHER PARTIES FOR A COMMON PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD WHICH WOULD HOPEFULLY PERMIT THE PCI TO ENTER THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, WITHOUT FORMALLY ENTERING AN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

5. ACCORDING TO BARCA, THE PCI LEADERSHIP HAS CONCLUDED THAT NEITHER THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE NOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH DIRECT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IS LIKELY TO MATERIALIZE

IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IN FACT, SPEAKING PRIVATELY, HE SAID THAT THE LEADERSHIP HAS CONCLUDED THAT NEITHER OF THESE ALTERNATIVES SEEMS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ROME 02663 02 OF 02 171942Z

IN THE PARTY'S INTERESTS AT THE PRESENT TIME, ALTHOUGH FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION PCI LEADERS WOULD CONTINUE TO TALK ABOUT THEM. HOWEVER, THE PARTY FEELS A NEED TO MAKE A "SMALL STEP FORWARD" WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT THE PCI HAS IN MIND IN WORKING FOR A PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD PERMITTING IT TO ENTER A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY.

6. BARCA EXPRESSED HIS OPINION THAT THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY DISSENTERS IN EASTERN EUROPE WOULD NOT HURT THE PCI IN THE SHORT TERM. THIS LARGELY BECAUSE THE PARTY HAS ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS STATED ITS NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LACK OF CERTAIN HUMAN RIGHTS IN THESE COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, BARCA DID FORESEE SOME PROBLEMS FOR THE PCI SHOULD ATTENTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE CONTINUE TO BE THE FOCAL POINT FOR PRESS STORIES OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, BARCA SAID THAT THE PCI IS NATURALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ITS OWN DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABERRATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALISM IN THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. IN TRYING TO DEVELOP ITS OWN BRAND OF SOCIALISM SUITED TO THE CONDITIONS IN ITALY, BARCA SAID THAT THE PARTY IS TRYING TO DRAW UPON THE BEST SOCIAL EXPERIENCES FOUND BOTH IN WESTERN AND EASTERN STYLE SOCIETIES. HE ADDED THAT THE PCI IS CURRENTLY OPERATING ON THE BASIS OF A PROGRAM ADOPTED BY THE CONGRESS OF 1956. THERE WERE SUGGESTIONS THAT THE LAST CONGRESS (HELD IN 1975) SHOULD ADOPT A NEW OVERALL PARTY PROGRAM. HOWEVER, THE GENERAL CONSENSUS WAS THAT PARTY THINKING ON MANY CRUCIAL PROBLEMS HAD NOT EVOLVED SUFFICIENTLY TO WARRANT THE DRAFTING OF A DEFINITIVE LONG-TERM PROGRAM. MEANWHILE, THE PARTY HAS CONSTITUTED AS SERIES OF STUDY COMMISSIONS WHOSE TASK WILL BE TO EXAMINE A VARIETY OF PROBLEMS (THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL IN SOCIETY, WORKER INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT, ROLE OF THE MARKET ECONOMY IN A SOCIALIST SOCIETY) WITH A VIEW TO UTILIZE THE FINDINGS TO WRITE AT SOME FUTURE POINT A NEW PARTY PROGRAM. THROUGH THIS PROCESS, THE PCI HOPES TO WORK FOR THE EVOLUTION OF A SOCIALIST SOCIETY WHICH AVOIDS THE MISTAKES WHICH HAVE OCCURRED AND ARE OCCURRING IN EASTERN EUROPE. BEAUDRY

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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